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**NEWS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**OHS Urges Motorcyclists to Ride Smart After Dramatic Rise in  
Motorcycle Fatalities Over Last Three Weeks**  
*Cycle traffic likely to increase next week for Delmarva Bike Week in MD*

**Dover** – Fifteen motorcyclists have been killed in Delaware traffic crashes since January 1<sup>st</sup>, with more than half of the deaths (8) occurring in the last three and a half weeks. According to State Police reports, speed and failing to negotiate curves are primary factors in these crashes. The Delaware Office of Highway Safety Office of Highway Safety (OHS) is urging motorcyclists to slow down and operate their bikes defensively in order to prevent further needless loss of life.

OHS is also urging drivers of passenger and commercial vehicles to be on the lookout for, and share the road with, increased motorcycle traffic expected in the coming week. Delmarva Bike Week, which is held annually in Ocean City, Maryland, will begin Thursday September 11<sup>th</sup> and run through Sunday the 14<sup>th</sup>. Hundreds of motorcyclists heading for the popular event will likely be seen on Routes 1, and 113.

Knowing this, increased public awareness efforts as part of OHS's *Ride Safe. Ride Smart.* motorcycle safety awareness campaign had already been planned for the month of September. The campaign, now in its third year, began in May to coincide with National Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. It includes placing nine billboards targeting motorists with a "share the road" message throughout the state, and airing 15 second radio ads reminding cyclists to ride safe, on radio stations statewide.

Both locally and nationally, the number of registered motorcycles has been steadily increasing in the last few years. In Delaware, motorcycle deaths have also been on the rise since

2001, and hit an all time high in 2005 when 21 motorcyclists died in crashes. Though that number dropped by almost half in 2006, it rose again in 2007, when 17 cyclists were killed.

When the motorcyclist is at fault in a crash, it is often the result of speed, alcohol use, lack of training or inattentive driving. Surprising to many people would be the realization that the average age of motorcyclists killed in crashes is 42, not a younger operator. When the driver of a passenger vehicle is at fault it is often because of inattentive driving, following too closely, or making a left turn into the path of the motorcyclist saying, "I didn't see him/her."

Motorcyclists are much more vulnerable than passenger vehicle drivers in the event of a crash. Research shows that approximately 80 percent of motorcycle crashes injure or kill a motorcycle rider, while only 20 percent of passenger car crashes injure or kill a driver or passenger in their vehicle.

OHS is offering the following safety tips for both motorists and motorcycle operators:

#### Motorcyclists

- Follow posted speed limits and keep all wheels on the ground at all times
- Do not try to share a lane with a vehicle, stay in your own
- Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic;
- Never drink and ride, it is responsible for roughly 1/4<sup>th</sup> of Delaware's motorcycle deaths
- Watch out for loose sand, gravel, debris, and uneven and textured surfaces
- Do not pass on the shoulder
- Suit up for Safety – wear not only a helmet, but also appropriate eye gear, long sleeves, over the ankle boots and reflective material when riding at night
- Keep your skills up to date by signing up for a DMV Motorcycle Training Course, either beginner or advanced

#### Motorists:

- Always make a visual check for motorcycles by checking mirrors and blind spots before entering or leaving a lane of traffic and at intersections;
- Always allow a motorcyclist the full lane width;
- Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic;
- Allow more following distance, three or four seconds, when following a motorcycle, so the motorcyclist has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency; Never tailgate.

For more information on the Motorcycle Training Courses visit [www.dmv.de.gov](http://www.dmv.de.gov) and click on Driver Services.

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